



PASTORAL LETTER

ADDRESSED TO THE

CLERGY AND LAITY

OF

The Diocese of Halifax.

BY

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Archbishop of Halifax.

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CORNELIUS, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND FAVOR OF THE
APOSTOLIC SEE, ARCHBISHOP OF HALIFAX.

*To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Halifax, health
and benediction in the Lord:*

DEARLY BELOVED :

Almighty God, speaking through his Holy Prophet Jeremias, and wishing to show at once the sad state of Religion among the Jewish people, and to point out its cause, said : “ *With desolation is all the land made desolate ; because there is none that considereth in heart.*”—(Jer. XII-11.) A spiritual desolation overspread the land ; and the cause of it was, “ because there is none that considereth in heart ” ; because none really turned their thoughts to God ; because men were more intent on the pleasures and interests of this world, than on the sanctification of their souls.

Were a Jeremias to arise in one day, and receive a command to deliver God's message to the Christian world would he not have to use nearly the selfsame language ? There is a vast amount of spiritual desolation, and it is because men do not consider in heart. The sweet yoke of Faith is cast aside as if it were an intolerable burden ; the practices of religion are neglected, and sometimes derided ; the very Commandments of God himself are broken without fear or remorse. Some, forgetting the injunction of the Apostle, “ not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise ; but to be wise unto sobriety,”—(Rom. XII-3.) arrogate to themselves all wisdom, and presume to sit in judgment on the works of God himself. They laugh at revelation ; they mock the divinity of Christ ; they call Christianity a superstition ; and sneer at devout believers as weak imbeciles. Others, not so openly impious, but in whom Christian sentiments are half choked by evil passions, lose no opportunity of having a covert thrust at the teachings of strict morality, and of throwing a doubt on some fundamental truth. They have enough of evil in them to make them wish that Christianity were false ; and enough of Christianity to render their conduct inexcusable. Truly, “ with desolation is all the land made desolate.”

Now, the cause of this desolation is a want of reflection,—“there is none that considereth in heart.” Perhaps at no time in the history of the human race did men boast so much of using their reason as in the present; and, perhaps, at no time was reason used to such little purpose in spiritual matters. In physical science, and in mechanical devices our age towers above all others. Our comforts and our conveniences are carefully studied, and skilfully catered to. Hence men who think only of the world, and live only for it, are lost in admiration, and call upon all to bow down and adore the golden calf called “Modern Progress.” Whilst human ingenuity is actively at work in these two departments, the blight of Materialism is destroying all other Arts and Sciences. Painters and Sculptors, devoid of the Religious sentiment, no longer create; they simply imitate, and imitate on the grossest moral range. A dreary superficiality has invaded the schools; the human mind is treated as a piece of mechanism. Unfortunate babes, who ought to be romping in the nursery, are doomed to torture in Kindergarten classes, in which the mind gets its first materialistic set. The school boy, instead of being made to understand thoroughly the first elements of Grammar and Arithmetic, is, machine-like, passed through a fearful array of high sounding classes, and emerges with a profound dislike to serious study. If he should be sent to a college he is wound up, or “crammed,” with answers and formulas of which he understands next to nothing, and goes forth to begin life with superficial ideas of everything. What wonder that so many wrecks strew the wayside of life? What wonder that so many are easily led astray by the sophisms of unbelief? Reason cannot be used aright, because it has not been developed aright. A more simple, but at the same time a more solid form of training, and a constant inculcation of the supernatural, can alone save us from the dead level of barren superficiality.

Did men use aright their reason they would never deny an all-creating God. God is manifest in his works. He speaks to us from every flower, and plant, and tree. His voice can be heard in the moaning of the waves; and his power can be read in the starry firmament. The sun proclaims his majesty, and the moon gives testimony to his might. The laws of nature, which are the foreseen and intended effects of forces created by him, speak of his wisdom; and the seed time, and harvest time, bear witness to his loving Providence. Well could the Apostle say: “For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, his eternal power also and divinity.”—(Rom. I-20.) Yes, the eternal power and divinity of God can be learnt from the things he has made. Right reason teaches this; and those who do not recognize God as the Creator are, according to St.

Paul, "inexcusable.—(Rom.I—20.) What then are we to think of the men who in our day, with the light of Christianity shining around about, with the lessons of nineteen centuries of Church History before them, either deny God to be the creator of heaven and earth, or speak of him as an unknown and unknowable cause? Human reason cannot, it is true, fully comprehend the infinite Being; but from the visible works of creation it can deduce the existence of an uncreated, all powerful First Cause, the source and origin of life, and power, and action. One finite being may have produced another finite being; but the chain of finite causes must have a first link from which all the rest depend. That first link is the Supreme Power that we call God. Moreover, from the order and regularity of the Universe,—from the intricate but never clashing system of Planetary motion—from the wonderful adaptation of means to the end everywhere displayed in nature, human reason, if used aright, can conclude that the Supreme Power is, also, supremely intelligent. It were more reasonable to say that a complicated steam engine is the work of an unreasoning man, than that nature, and nature's laws, are the result of a blind, unintelligent force. And yet, this is the absurdity which men who are called "great thinkers," and the "leaders of modern thought," proclaim when they either deny God, or speak of a great unknowable cause. This puerile nonsense, which would be laughed at in a schoolboy, is read with admiration, and praised as a marvel of brilliant reasoning, when appearing in a Quarterly. And why? "Because there in none that considereth in heart."

The "eternal power also and divinity" of God are then made manifest by the "things that are made"; and right reason proclaims that a living, intelligent, all powerful God has created the universe in wisdom, and rules it with intelligence. Therefore the first cause is not unknown, or unknowable, although he is invisible; and human reason is never more nobly employed than in demonstrating his existence against those who, "professing themselves to be wise, became fools," (Rom. I—22) and are rendered "inexcusable," because they did not learn God's eternal power and divinity from his works.

But an intelligent God who created the world, and who watches over it with loving care, cannot be indifferent to the actions of his creatures. Here, again, reason, so often invoked, but so little used, by unbelievers, tells us that the end of Creation is the Glory of God; and that we, as subjects of God, are bound to praise and glorify him, and to obey what we believe to be his Will. The Apostle, speaking of the Nations that were "inexcusable" because they did not learn God's existence from his works, adds: "When they had known God,

they have not glorified him as God, nor gave thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened." How many, alas! are in that state to-day. How many, seeing what the ingenuity of man can effect, and not considering in their heart, forget God's action in the world, laugh at the efficacy of prayer, dethrone the Almighty, and put humanity in his stead. It is a renewal of the darkness of heart of the old Pagan world, when men "professing themselves to be wise, became fools."

A Natural Law which teaches the duty of adoring God, and distinguishes between virtue and vice, is written in the soul of each of us. Conscience, or right reason dictating what we should do, or leave undone, at any particular time, is a guide ever intimately present. Too often, however, men allow passion, or prejudice, or worldly interest, or sensual pleasures, to blind their intellect, and to sway their will. Conscience then becomes but as a voice crying in the wilderness.

But God was not satisfied with imprinting the Natural Law on our souls; he confirmed it by Revelation, and prescribed, moreover, the manner of life his faithful children should live. Now, since God is infinitely perfect whatsoever he has revealed must be true; human reason may err, but the word of God shall stand forever. The physical liberty man has of choosing the wrong, is an imperfection, not a gift of which he should boast. Hence since God's revealed word is the unerring truth, our reason is never more reasonable, is never more ennobled, is never nearer to perfection than when firmly holding, even though it cannot comprehend, a doctrine revealed by God. And yet, against this self-evident fact unbelievers raise a shout of derision, and weak-kneed believers hang their heads, and seek to gain the name of an "enlightened thinker" by appearing to mildly deprecate the action of their more fervent brethren. Every civic and moral virtue has, at some time, been profaned by being used as a cloak to some vice; and now the God given reason of man is invoked to destroy that reason itself. Surely those who are misled by the miserable sophistries of men who reject Revelation, do not consider in heart. Surely they forget that "we have access through Faith into this grace wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God,"—(Rom. V—2.)

Therefore, Dearly Beloved, when you read, or hear, any attacks on God's existence, or on any article of Your Faith, even though made by those whom an unthinking crowd proclaims great, you should not be disturbed in mind, nor should you seek to apologise, as it were, for your belief. You are the truly

reasonable ones; your enemies are those who have "become fools," by esteeming themselves wise."

But even those who believe in Revelation, unless they "consider in heart," will lose little by little their understanding of God's word. How else can we account for the indifference manifested by many to the teachings of God's Law? How else explain the revolt against the Church? "One fold, and one Shepherd," "one Kingdom," "one Faith, one Baptism," is what Christ instituted. That Spiritual Kingdom of his Church was to last forever, and he was to remain with it. It could not change, for he was indwelling in it; its teachings being true they must exclude everything not conformable with them. And yet, in spite of this, men rebelled against its teachings, and proclaimed that they had found Religious freedom, because they could embrace every form of error, and change to-morrow the opinions they held to-day. This is slavery not freedom; for the truth alone makes us free.

The Apostle (I. Cor. VI—9,10) enumerates a long list of those who will be excluded from the Kingdom of God. And our dear Lord (Math. XXV.) gives a lengthy account of the final Judgment, and ends by telling us that the wicked "shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting." Reason, as well, tells us that different lots must await the good and the impious. Notwithstanding this, a doctrine pleasing to men of easy morality is preached. Men who, perhaps, never in their lives dried the tears of the afflicted,—who never spoke a kind word to the helpless,—who never checked their lusts to spare the miseries of others, dare to invoke the mercy of God as a plea for not condemning them for their unatoned sins. God is just as well as merciful; his mercy reigns on earth; his justice sits on a tribunal in Heaven. He did not make man to condemn him; he made him for Heaven; but because many will use their free will to disobey God, and will appear before him in their sin, they bring on their own condemnation which God lovingly tried to avert. No man who leads a pure life disbelieves in God, or in his justice. Who are those who "wrest to their own perdition" the scripture, and change "the truth of God into a lie," teaching in opposition to Christ and his Apostle that no sin will exclude from Heaven? Are they the holy ones of God, men who deny themselves and take up the Cross? Were they Apostles? Martyrs? Men who go about doing good? Oh no! They are chiefly those who would benefit by having God shorn of his justice.

Our Holy Church, Dearly Beloved, knowing, in her wisdom, that many perish because they do not consider in heart,

calls upon us to lay aside, as much as possible, all worldly thoughts, and to reflect seriously in our heart during the holy season of Lent. It is surely a suitable time for reflection and consideration, for it reminds us of Our Saviour's preparation for death. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and prayed. Were we to fast and pray, even for one whole day, how much light would it not bring to our souls. How many sins forgotten would be revealed; how many wrong motives of action would be laid bare. God in his awful grandeur and glory would seem to shine before our souls. We would recognize him as our Creator, and we would realize what "an evil and a bitter thing" it was to have ever left him. In the pure light of his eternal years the earth, and its pleasures, vanities and honours, would seem less than nothing; the vile nature of sin would horrify us, whilst duties which now appear mean and wearisome would grow light and inviting. The darkness of our road would be dispelled; the folly of those who have become fools by esteeming themselves to be wise, would be so plainly seen that we would wonder how an intellect could become so benighted. Our resolutions to lead a good life would be strengthened, and our sorrow for past sins intensified. These are some of the benefits of fasting, recollection and prayer, for even one day. If, then, "with desolation the whole land be made desolate, because there is none that considereth in heart," do you, Dearly Beloved, enter upon this Lenten Season fully resolved to consider in heart your eternal Salvation. If you cannot fast every day, you can, at least, fast sometimes: or if the nature of your work, or reasons of health should hinder even this, you can occasionally mortify your appetite by eating less than usual. You can abstain from all unnecessary luxuries, and especially from the use of intoxicating liquors. Let each one resolve to overcome, with God's grace, his bad, or dangerous habits, so that all may comply with the Apostle's teaching: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service." (Rom. XII—1.) We are to present our bodies a "living sacrifice" by resisting our bad passions, and by seeking, not our bodily comfort first, but the will of God and his justice. We are to present them a "holy" sacrifice by keeping them undefiled, by respecting them as "temples of the Holy Ghost," and by guarding our eyes lest they "should see iniquity;" our ears lest they should hear evil; and our tongue lest it become what St. James calls it, "a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (III—8.) It is, indeed, a deadly poison when it vomits forth curses and imprecations, or obscene speeches regarding things which the Apostle tells us should "not even be named" amongst us. And this service is a "reasonable"

one, both because God, as our Supreme Master, has a right to our service, and because a few years of service here will ensure us an eternity of happiness hereafter.

Therefore, Dearly Beloved, we exhort you to make good use of this penitential season for the strengthening of good resolutions, and for the sanctification of your souls. Consider in heart the shortness of life, the certainty of death, the searching judgment that must follow. Think of the suffering and death of our dear Lord, so that your souls may understand the enormity of sin, and realize how much we owe to our Redeemer. Be instant in prayer. Without proper prayer you cannot save your souls. God knows your wants, it is true; but he wills that you should ask that you may receive; and seek that you may find; and knock that it may be opened to you. Let the pious practice, so strongly recommended by our Holy Father the Pope, of saying the Rosary in your families every day, be begun during this Lent, and continued for the rest of your lives. Blessed, indeed, will be the house in which the Rosary shall be daily recited with devotion. Prepare yourselves to worthily receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, so that you may be "reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God."—(Rom. XII-2.) And do you, dear Brethren of the Clergy, increase your pastoral zeal during this "acceptable time," going bravely and unceasingly, like the good Shepherd, in search of the straying members of your flock. By admonitions and warnings which shall have love, not bitterness, for their key note, strive to teach them their duties, and to bring them back to God. Remind all of the obligation of complying with the precept of the Church regarding their Easter Confession and Communion, and read in your Churches the Canons bearing on these points. We enclose the Regulations for the ensuing Lent.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

This Pastoral shall be read in all the Churches of this Diocese, as soon as possible after its reception by the Pastor.

† C. O'BRIEN,

Abp. of Halifax.

E. F. MURPHY,

Secretary.

ST. MARY'S, Halifax,
East of the Chair of St. Peter,
at Antioch, 1884.